

North Sea Fish is heading for its finalisation

The 6 North Sea Fish partners are cooperating for more than a year now. The successful partnership has been busy with studies and implementing the insights in their daily practice in the ports. Several network meetings and conferences were organised to promote sustainable fisheries in the North Sea Region and disseminate lessons and insights to other stakeholders.

The North Sea Fish partners all seek ways to transform their ports and regions. An important milestone was the completion of a report regarding future trends for the transition towards sustainable North Sea Fisheries. The report concluded that on one hand the efficiency of the fleet is improving and fish stocks are generally in good state, but on the other hand there are some serious challenges such as a decline in the fleet and profitability. This study will be utilized as a framework for further activities in the NSF project. The 6 port regions worked together on the transition to sustainable fishery, and translated the current challenges into concrete actions



A challenge is to deal with a decline in the fleet due to high fuel costs and environmental requirements. The ports of Harlingen, De Marne and Hanstholm therefore explore the future use of liquid natural gas (LNG) by fisheries and other industries.

For the remaining fleet, increased efficiency can also strengthen the fisheries. The Port of Hanstholm created a calculation method for investments in fishery ports responding to sustainable fishing methods, technical optimisation and increased port logistics. The new harbour design of Harlingen contains the concept of a new “notched” jetty to moor Euro cutters. This is a result of participation of the fishermen in the practical blue print design.

Sustainability is a chance for all partners, it might improve market access and premium prices. Partner ILVO is currently screening various sustainability initiatives and their effect on the market. To seize the opportunities, the sustainably caught wet fish needs good track and trace information about its origin. In addition work is done on quality labels and information systems on sustainable fish. To organize the information collected and facilitate benchmarking, a database ‘information systems on sustainable seafood’ has been developed. ILVO is now consulting producers, auctions and government fishery departments about the implementation of sustainability data in the regular fish information system.

Another chance to broaden the economies of port regions is linking fishery to tourism. De Marne started a pilot to bridge the gap between fisheries and the tourism sector in the harbour area of Lauwersoog, as a first step to eventually gain a second income base. The municipality of Sluis realises a Fishery Experience Centre. This centre will create new business by using this traditional sector in an innovative way, and build on the identity of Breskens as a fishing town.



North Sea Fish partner regions also broadened their networks in order to stimulate innovation. They stimulated collaboration between stakeholders and other industries. For example, the University of Hull has strengthened their working relationship with the Grimsby Fish Market and other UK stakeholders in the North Sea fish industry. The municipality de Marne appointed a fishery contact person to facilitate contacts between the fishermen, harbour organisations and government to identify quick wins and possibilities for optimisation of the supply chain.

In the second part of the project, the North Sea Fish partnership will continue to contribute to the sustainable transition of fishing, by implementing concrete strategies, technologies and methods for specialisation and broadening of the wet fish supply chain. This will finally lead to increased innovative capacity of fish based regional economies in the partner regions.

And as a result of effective communication, other regions with fishery economies in (and outside) the North Sea Region will also be able to benefit and take advantage from the outcome and results of North Sea Fish.